

I. AMENDMENTS

Please make the following amendments:

A. In the claims:

1-16. (cancelled)

17. (currently amended) A method for distributing a plurality of items to a customer comprising the steps of:

placing said items destined for said customer into a shipping unit;

placing a label on said shipping unit, said label having a unique identifier;

creating an electronic shipment record identifying said shipping unit by said identifier and listing said items within said shipping unit, the electronic shipment record associating the identifier with the items within the shipping unit;

sending said electronic shipment record to said customer;

delivering said shipping unit to said customer; and

receiving said shipping unit by said customer;

reading the identifier on the label; and

~~wherein the customer receives said shipping unit by~~ independently identifying said the items within the shipping unit using said the electronic shipment record received by the customer, said identifying by electronically reading said identifier on said label.

18. (currently amended) The method of claim 17 wherein receiving said shipping unit by said customer further includes verifying contents of said shipping unit using said listing of said items within said ~~container~~ shipping unit in said electronic shipment record.

19. (currently amended) The method of claim 18 wherein verifying the contents of said shipping unit using said listing of said items within said ~~container~~ shipping unit in said electronic shipment record further includes electronically recording any discrepancy between said contents of said shipping unit and said listing in said electronic shipment record.

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 17 wherein receiving said shipping unit by said customer further includes creating a delivery record of said delivery, said delivery record created by electronically reading said identifier.
21. (previously presented) The method of claim 18 wherein receiving said shipping unit by said customer further includes creating a receipt record of said receipt of said shipping unit, said receipt record created by identifying said shipping unit and listing any differences between said items listed on said electronic shipment record and said items within said container.
22. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein said unique identifier is a barcode.
23. (previously presented) The method of claim 17 wherein receiving said shipping unit by said customer further includes storing said shipment record on a portable computer prior to receiving said shipping unit.
24. (previously presented) The method of claim 17 wherein delivering said shipping unit to said customer further includes electronically capturing a signature confirming delivery of said shipping unit to said customer.
25. (previously presented) The method of claim 17 wherein delivering said shipping unit to said customer further includes electronically recording a time of delivery of said shipping unit to said customer.
26. (currently amended) A method of distributing a plurality of items from a warehouse to a remote site comprising the steps of:
creating an electronic shipment record of said items to be delivered to said remote site,
said shipment record listing a shipping quantity of each of said items;
sending the electronic shipment record to said remote site prior to delivery of said items;
and
delivering said items at said remote site;
wherein said remote site receives said shipping unit ~~by creating~~ and creates an electronic

delivery record, using said electronic shipment record, of said items delivered at said remote site, said delivery record listing a delivered quantity of each of said items and identifying any differences between said shipping quantity and said delivered quantity.

27. (previously presented) The method of claim 17 wherein delivering said shipping unit to said customer further comprises the step of using said identifier on said label to ascertain electronically the location of said shipping unit.

28. (previously presented) The method of claim 17 wherein delivering said shipping unit to said customer further comprises the steps of:

providing delivery information for said shipping unit to a delivery device from a distribution center computer system;

loading said shipping unit into a delivery vehicle; and

verifying that said shipping unit has been properly loaded into said delivery vehicle by electronically reading said identifier on said label with said delivery device.

29. (previously presented) The method of claim 28 further comprising the step of creating a delivery record by electronically reading said identifier on said label after said delivering of said shipping unit to said customer.

30. (previously presented) The method of claim 29 further comprising the step of uploading said delivery record to said distribution center computer system.

31. (previously presented) The method of claim 18 wherein the step of sending said electronic shipment record to said customer comprises downloading by said customer of said electronic shipment record from a distribution center computer system.

32. (previously presented) The method of claim 31 wherein the step of verifying said contents of said shipping unit comprises electronically reading said identifier on said label and electronically comparing said reading of said identifier on said label to said electronic shipment

record.

33. (previously presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said electronic shipment record is created prior to said delivering of said shipping unit to said customer.

34. (previously presented) The method of claim 17 wherein the step of identifying said shipping unit further comprises identifying said shipping unit and the items therein by said customer using said electronic shipment record.

35. (previously presented) The method of claim 34 further comprising verifying the contents of the shipping unit by electronically reading a second identifier on at least one item, the second identifier uniquely identifying the item.

36. (previously presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the step of verifying further includes generating a warning if any discrepancy exists between the items to be delivered and the delivered items.

37. (previously presented) The method of claim 36, wherein the step of delivering further includes verifying that the items being delivered to the customer correspond to the items delivered to the customer, prior to the receiving by the customer.

38. (currently amended) The method of claim 37, wherein the step of verifying further includes verifying the contents of the shipping unit by electronically reading a second identifier on at least one item, the second identifier uniquely identifying the item by description and the number of items so described in the shipping unit.

39. (previously presented) The method of claim 26 further comprising the step of inputting orders for said items into a distribution center computer system, wherein said shipment record is created from order information entered into said distribution center computer system prior to said delivery of said items to said remote site.

40. (previously presented) The method of claim 39 further comprising the step of providing said electronic delivery record to said distribution center computer system.

41. (currently amended) A method for distributing a plurality of items to a customer comprising the steps of:

submitting an order to a distribution center by the customer for the items to be delivered;
placing the ordered items into a container, each item having an item identifier to uniquely identify each item;
placing a label on the container, the label having a unique container identifier;
delivering the container to the customer;
sending shipment and invoice data containing the items shipped and ordered to the customer; and
receiving the container by said customer;
using the shipment and invoice data by the customer electronically reading the container identifier on the label of the container to identify the delivered container and the items in the container from the shipment and invoice data;
determining the items received by identifying the items in the container by electronically reading the item identifier on each item; and,
reconciling the items received with the items on the shipment and invoice data.

42. (previously presented) The method of 41 further comprising generating a warning signal if a discrepancy exists between the items delivered and the items ordered.

43. (previously presented) The method of claim 42 further including electronically recording any discrepancy between the items shipped in the container and the items ordered contained on the shipment and invoice data.

44. (previously presented) The method of claim 43 further including creating a delivery record of the delivery, the delivery record created by electronically reading container identifier.

45. (previously presented) The method of claim 44 wherein each of the container identifier

and the item identifier is a barcode.

46. (previously presented) The method of claim 45 further including electronically recording a time of delivery of the container to the customer.

47. (previously presented) The method of claim 41, wherein the step of submitting an order further comprises:

scanning a barcode of the items to be ordered; and
selecting a quantity for each item ordered.

48. (previously presented) The method of claim 47 further comprising:
returning at least one item by generating a return list by scanning the item to be returned
and associating the item with a quantity to be returned; and
sending the returns list to a distribution center, the orders being originally received at the
distribution center.

49. (previously presented) The method of claim 48 further comprising:
creating a retail record which associates the item with a price of the item;
electronically identifying the item;
modifying the price of the item; and
transferring the retail record to the distribution center.

50. (previously presented) The method of claim 49 further comprising: selecting a preload option on a distribution device wherein the container barcode is electronically identified as the container is loaded onto a transport device thereby verifying that the container and the items therein are loaded onto the transport device.

51. (currently amended) A method of distributing a plurality of items from a distributor to a customer, the distributor having a distribution database, the customer having a customer database, the items having item identifiers and being shipped in a container having a container identifier, the method comprising the steps of:

creating an electronic invoice in the distribution database by electronically associating the item identifiers on the items with the container identifier on the container in which the items are packed;
sending the electronic invoice from the distribution database to the customer database;
~~and~~
creating an electronic receipt, of the items in the container, in the customer database when receiving the container delivered to the customer with the packed items; and
~~by~~ electronically reconciling the items packed in the delivered container with the items on the electronic invoice in the customer database.

52. (previously presented) The method of claim 51, further comprising the step of sending the electronic receipt from the customer database to the distribution database.

53. (previously presented) The method of claim 51, further comprising the step of recording delivery of the container to the customer in the distribution database.

54. (previously presented) The method of claim 51, wherein sending the electronic invoice from the distribution database to the customer database comprises the step of sending the electronic invoice via an electronic medium.

55. (previously presented) The method of claim 54, wherein sending the electronic invoice from the distribution database to the customer database comprises the step of sending the electronic invoice via the Internet.

56. (previously presented) The method of claim 51, wherein creating the electronic receipt in the customer database when receiving the container delivered to the customer with the packed items comprises the step of electronically reading the container identifier on the container.

57. (previously presented) The method of claim 51, wherein electronically reconciling the items packed in the delivered container with the items on the electronic invoice in the customer database further comprises the steps of:

recalling the item identifiers in the electronic invoice on the customer database;
reading the item identifiers on the packed items; and
marking the read items as received on the electronic invoice in the customer database.

58. (previously presented) The method of claim 51, wherein electronically reconciling the items packed in the delivered container with the items on the electronic invoice in the customer database further comprises the step of reconciling a first record in the customer database having the items received by the customer with a second record in the customer database having items ordered by the customer.

59. (previously presented) The method of claim 51, wherein electronically reconciling the items packed in the delivered container with the items on the electronic invoice in the customer database further comprises the step of generating a warning if a discrepancy exists between the received container or packed item and the container or item stored in the electronic invoice in the customer database.

60. (previously presented) The method of claim 51, further comprising the steps of creating an electronic order in the customer database containing a plurality of ordered items and sending the electronic order from the customer database to the distribution database.

61. (new) The method of claim 17 in which the step of identifying the shipping unit further comprises using the electronic shipment record received prior to delivering the shipping unit to the customer.

62. (new) The method of claim 17 further comprising acknowledging the receipt of the plurality of items in the shipping unit by electronically reading the identifier on the label of the shipping unit.

63. (new) The method of claim 39 further comprising:
determining the number of items matching the item description which are in the container; and
comparing said number determined to the number of items matching the item description on the shipment record.